NUMB. CX.

The GUARDIAN.

——Non ego paucis
Offendor maculis, quas aut Incuria fudit
Aut humana parum cavit natura——

Friday, July 17. 1713.

THE Candour which *Horace* ſhows in the Motto of my Paper, is that which diſtinguiſhes a Critick from a Caviller. He declares that he is not offended with thoſe little Faults in a Poetical Compoſition, which may be imputed to Inadvertency, or to the Imperfection of Human Nature. The truth of it is, there can be no more a perfect Work in the World than a perfect Man. To ſay of a celebrated Piece that there are Faults in it, is in effect to ſay no more, than that the Author of it was a Man. For this reaſon I conſider every Critick that attacks an Author in high Reputation as the Slave in the *Roman* Triumph, who was to call out to the Conqueror, *Remember, Sir, that you are a Man.* I ſpeak this in relation to the following Letter, which Criticiſes the Works of a great Poet, whoſe very Faults have more Beauty in them than the moſt elaborate Compoſitions of many more correct Writers. The Remarks are very curious and juſt, and introduced by a Compliment to the Work of an Author, who I am ſure would not care for being praiſed at the Expence of another's Reputation. I muſt therefore deſire my Correſpondent to excuſe me, if I do not publiſh either the Preface or Concluſion of his Letter, but only the Critical Part of it.

SIR,

* *

'OUR Tragedy Writers have been notoriouſly 'defective in giving proper Sentiments to 'the Perſons they introduce. Nothing is more 'common than to hear an Heathen talking of An-'gels and Devils, the Joys of Heaven and the Pains 'of Hell, according to the Chriſtian Syſtem. *Leigh*'s '*Alcander* diſcovers himſelf to be a Carteſian in the 'firſt Page of *OEdipus*.

——The Sun's Sick too,
Shortly he'll be an Earth——

As *Dryden*'s *Cleomenes* is acquainted with the *Copernican* Hypotheſis Two thouſand Years before its Invention.

I am pleas'd with my own Work; Jove *was not more*
With Infant Nature, when his ſpacious Hand
Had rounded this huge Ball of Earth and Seas,
To give it the firſt puſh, and ſee it rowl
Along the vaſt Abyſs——

'I have now Mr. *Dryden*'s *Don Sebaſtian* before 'me, in which I find frequent Alluſions to Ancient 'Hiſtory, and the old Mythology of the Heathen. 'It is not very natural to ſuppoſe a King of *Portu-'gal* would be borrowing Thoughts out of *Ovid*'s 'Metamorphoſis when he talked even to thoſe of 'his own Court, but to allude to theſe *Roman* Fa-'bles when he talks to an Emperor of *Barbary*, 'ſeems very extraordinary. But obſerve how he 'deſires him out of the Claſſicks in the following 'Lines:

Why didſt thou not engage me Man to Man,
And try the Virtue of that Gorgon *Face*
To Stare me into Statue?

A'me da

(Price Two Pence.)

'*Almeyda* at the ſame time is more Book-Learned than *Don Sebaſtian*. She plays an *Hydra* upon the Emperor that is full as good as the *Gorgon*.

O that I had the fruitful Heads of Hydra,
That one might bourgeon where another fell!
Still wou'd I give thee work, ſtill, ſtill, thou Tyrant,
And hiſs thee with the laſt ———

'She afterwards in Alluſion to *Hercules* bids him 'lay down the *Lyon's Skin, and take the Diſtaff*; 'and in the following Speech utters her Paſſion ſtill 'more Learnedly,

No, were we join'd, ev'n tho' it were in Death,
Our Bodies burning in one Funeral Pile,
The Prodigy of Thebes *wou'd be renew'd,*
And my divided Flame ſhould break from thine.

'The Emperor of *Barbary* ſhows himſelf acquainted with the *Roman* Poets as well as either of his 'Priſoners, and anſwers the foregoing Speech in 'the ſame Claſſic Strain.

Serpent, I will engender Poiſon with thee.
Our Offspring, like the Seed of Dragons Teeth,
Shall iſſue arm'd, and fight themſelves to Death.

'*Ovid* ſeems to have been *Muley Molock*'s Favourite Author, witneſs the Lines that follow.

She's ſtill inexorable, ſtill imperious
And loud, as if like Bacchus *born in Thunder.*

'I ſhall conclude my Remarks on his Part, with 'that Poetical Complaint of his being in Love, and 'leave my Reader to conſider how prettily it wou'd 'ſound in the Mouth of an Emperor of *Morocco*.

The God of Love once more has ſhot his Fires
Into my Soul, and my whole Heart receives him.

'*Muley Zeydan* is as ingenious a Man as his 'Brother *Muley Molock*; as where he hints at 'the Story of *Caſtor* and *Pollux*.

———————*May we ne'er meet!*
For, like the Twins of Leda, *when I mount*
He gallops down the Skies ——— —

'As for the *Mufti* we will ſuppoſe that he was 'bred up a Scholar, and not only verſed in the 'Law of *Mahomet*, but acquainted with all Kinds 'of polite Learning. For this Reaſon he is not 'at all ſurprized when *Dorax* calls him a *Phaeton* 'in one Place, and in another tells him he is like '*Archimedes*.

'The *Mufti* afterwards mentions *Ximenes*, *Al'bornoz*, and Cardinal *Wolſey* by Name. The Poet 'ſeems to think he may make every Perſon, in his Play 'know as much as himſelf, and talk as well as he 'could have done on the ſame Occaſion. At leaſt I 'believe every Reader will agree with me, that the a'bove-mentioned Sentiments, to which I might have 'added ſeveral others, would have been better ſuited 'to the Court of *Auguſtus*, than that of a *Muley* '*Molock*. I grant they are beautiful in themſelves, 'and much more ſo in that noble Language which 'was peculiar to this great Poet. I only ob'ſerve that they are improper for the Perſons 'who make uſe of them. *Dryden* is indeed ge'nerally wrong in his Sentiments. Let any one 'read the Dialogue between *Octavia* and *Cleopatra*, 'and he will be amazed to hear a *Roman* Lady's 'Mouth filled with ſuch obſcene Raillery. If the 'virtuous *Octavia* departs from her Character, the 'looſe *Dolabella* is no leſs inconſiſtent with him'ſelf, when, all of a ſudden, he drops the *Pagan* 'and talks in the Sentiments of Revealed Religion.

——*Heav'n has but*
Our Sorrow for our Sins, and then delights
To pardon erring Man: Sweet Mercy ſeems
It's darling Attribute, which limits Juſtice;
As if there were Degrees in Infinite;
And Infinite wou'd rather want Perfection
Than puniſh to extent——

'I might ſhow ſeveral Faults of the ſame Na'ture in the celebrated *Aurenge-Zebe*. The Im'propriety of Thoughts in the Speeches of the 'great *Mogul* and his Empreſs has been generally 'cenſured. Take his Sentiments out of the ſhin'ing Dreſs of Words, and they would be too 'courſe for a Scene in *Billingſgate*.

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I am, &c.

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